felling of trees are reported in various States from time to time due to the biotic pressure from the adjoining villages and activities of timbers smugglers. The offenders for forest offences are booked under the relevant provisions of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and other such State Acts and rules for the time being in force. Government of India has also initiated Joint Forest Management programme in the country in order to check degradation and for rehabilitation of degraded forests. So far an area of about 14.3 million hectares is being managed under Joint Forest Management programme in 27 States. The States have also been requested to strengthen their forest protection machinery and funds are sanctioned under Centrally Sponsored Schemes for afforestation and forest protection activities.

Forest area under Darjeeling Hill Council

2009. SHRI LALITBHAI MEHTA :

SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Darjeeling Hill Council has been given some area of forests for maintenance and development;

(b) if so, how much area has been given;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the area given is totally degraded by illegal cutting, unauthorised occupation of forests, and the unholy links between office bearers and administrators have ruined the forests under Darjeeling Hill Council; and

(d) if so, Government's proposal to rectify the situation?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU) : (a) to (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Violation of Law by Cracker Manufacturers

2010. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the cracker manufacturers are violating the standard noise levels; and

(b) if so, what action is proposed to be taken by Government?